



MESOTHULAS.

MESOTHULAS.

THE PAST.



MESOTHULAS, I NEED TO...

OH, IT'S YOU! WELL? DID THEY APPROVE IT?

APPROVE WHA—OH, UM, HIGH COMMAND ARE WORRIED ABOUT THE ETHICS OF A COMPUTER THAT ASCERTAINS GUILT, BUT JUDGE TYREST WANTS IT UP FOR REVIEW.

"ETHICS"? HUH, SEEMS BESIDE THE POINT...

MESOTHULAS, I HAVE TO SPEAK WITH YOU...

YOU SEEM UNCHARACTERISTICALLY FLUSTERED. WHAT DO YOU NEED?



IT'S... CARPESSA.

THE NEUTRAL CITY?

NOT ANY MORE, NOT NEUTRAL, NOT A CITY... IT'S GONE.

OF COURSE—THE DECEPTI-BOMB! ALL ITS COMPONENTS TRACEABLE ONLY TO THE DECEPTICONS.

I TRUST IT WORKED TO YOUR SPECIFICATIONS?

AND COME ON; YOU'VE PASSED THROUGH THE RADIATION MOAT NOW; YOU CAN LOSE THE HELMET AT LEAST...



RIGHT...

...I WASN'T SURE I WAS SAFE YET...

YES, MESOTHULAS: THE BOMB DID WHAT BOMBS ARE SUPPOSED TO DO.

AND YES; EXPLOSIVE FORENSICS HAVE DECLARED IT A DECEPTICON WAR CRIME.

FOURTEEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-EIGHT NEUTRALS—FOURTEEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-EIGHT INNOCENTS—DEAD.

AND EVERY ONE OF THE SURVIVORS—EVERY ONE—HAS ENLISTED AS AUTOBOTS. INSTANT RADICALIZATION.

I... I DON'T THINK I CAN DO THIS ANY MORE, MESOTHULAS.





WHAT? NO, PROWL, STOP BEING FOOLISH.

YOU'RE GETTING EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANT: YOUR COMMANDERS ARE DAZZLED BY YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS—

—AND I'VE NEVER BEEN MORE INSPIRED— THE RATE THE IDEAS KEEP COMING...

AS FOR THE PROGRESS I'M MAKING ON THE SPECIMEN...



I WANT IT TO BE DIFFERENT, MESOTHULAS. I WANT TO BE DIFFERENT.

I CAN FEEL MYSELF BEING SEDUCED BY WHAT'S POSSIBLE AND DIVORCED FROM WHO I AM... WHO I SHOULD BE...

IT'S FINISHED.

THAT'S WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY, MESOTHULAS...

NO... IT'S FINISHED.

COME; I WANT TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING NAUGHTY.

NOW, I KNOW WE AGREED TO KILL THIS PROJECT— THAT THE SPARK EXTRACTION TECHNIQUE WOULD BE PUNISHMENT ENOUGH FOR THE PRISON YOU'RE BUILDING...

...BUT I HAD TO SEE IT REALIZED.



TELL ME... TELL ME YOU DIDN'T...



HERE IT IS: THE NOISEMAZE.

A SMALL POCKET DIMENSION ASSEMBLED FROM HARVESTED MATTER-GAPS IN THE FABRIC OF OUR UNIVERSE, HARNESSED TO ATTACK AND UNRAVEL THE SENSES OF ANYONE UNFORTUNATE ENOUGH TO BE BANISHED THERE.

IT SOLVES ALL THE AUTOBOTS' DETENTION PROBLEMS, PROWL. ONCE WITHIN, THE NOISEMAZE UTTERLY DESTABILIZES YOU.

ALL YOUR SENSES SCREAM LIES AT YOU; LIES YOU'RE TOO STUPIFIED TO COMPREHEND ANYWAY.

I THINK OF IT AS AN EXTRA-SPATIAL OUBLIETTE, ONLY ONE WHERE YOU FORGET WHO YOU ARE MORE SWIFTLY THAN THOSE WHO PLACED YOU THERE.

SO, PROWL, DO YOU THINK IT'LL MAKE YOUR LIFE EASIER?





now.

WHAT

THE HELL

IS THIS PLACE?



DID WE DO IT?

IS THIS THE NOISEMAZE?

KHUUUUH
GGHHHHH

RRRRAAAA-
WUWNNRRR

HUUURGHKK

SPRINGER,
DID WE
WHAT'S WRONG
WITH YOU?

WHAT'S
WRONG
WITH ALL
OF YOU?

AGHK THAT
SCREAMING!

JUST
STOP
OKAY?

CAN
YOU...?



HAHAHA
HAHAHAHA
HAHAHA!

AND YOU YOU'RE
BOTH JUST STANDING
THERE AND...

STOP
LAUGHING...
WHY IS HE
LAUGHING...?



HAHA

HA

HA

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HA

SOMEONE
TELL ME
WHAT'S
GOING ON!

HA

HAHA

THE NOISEMAZE.

YOUR NEW-FOUND WILLINGNESS TO TALK CONFIRMS ALL MY HOPES, PROWL...

... THAT THIS DATASLUG, THIS TINY TAB SWOLLEN WITH THE TESTIMONIES FROM THE AEGITAS WAR TRIALS—IS JUST AS VITAL TO YOU AS I THOUGHT.

YOU'VE CONVINCED ME YOU HAVE SOMETHING WORTH TALKING ABOUT, MESOTHULAS, BUT I WON'T DO IT BLIND.

SO GET YOUR GRAND ENTRANCE OUT OF THE WAY, AND SHOW YOURSELF.

THERE WAS ALWAYS A FRISSON OF NERVES BEFORE UNVEILING MY LATEST WORK TO YOU, PROWL. I FEEL IT MORE ACUTELY THAN EVER NOW.

YOU—
YOU'RE NOT MESOTHULAS.

NO.

NOT ANY MORE.

NOW I'M CALLED TARANTULAS.

WHAT ARE YOU? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO YOURSELF?

CHANGED, PROWL. YOU KNOW CHANGE; THAT THING YOU TRY AND FAIL TO DO EVERY FEW MILLION YEARS.

I KNOW THAT ABOUT YOU. I KNOW YOU'RE CURRENTLY GOING THROUGH ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE CYCLICAL PHASES WHERE YOUR CONSCIENCE CATCHES UP WITH YOU—

—AND YOU REMEMBER WHAT COLOR BADGE YOU WEAR; IT'S RED SO STARK AGAINST YOUR BLACK AND WHITE BODY.

SUCH ODD COLORS FOR ONE SO MORALLY OVERCAST AND GREY.



IT'S IRONIC THAT, AS A RACE, WE STRUGGLE TO MAKE THE CHANGES THAT REALLY COUNT.

THE AEGUITAS DATA, TARANTULAS.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH IT?

THE REAL ANSWER IS "ANYTHING I DAMN WELL PLEASE," BUT YOU'RE MORE DETAIL-ORIENTATED THAN THAT, AREN'T YOU?



THESE FILES SHOULDN'T EXIST, EVEN I DIDN'T KNOW THERE WAS A COPY STILL OUT THERE—
UNFF!

EVEN BEFORE THIS FINALLY CAME INTO MY POSSESSION, I COULD HAVE SUNK YOU, PROWL.

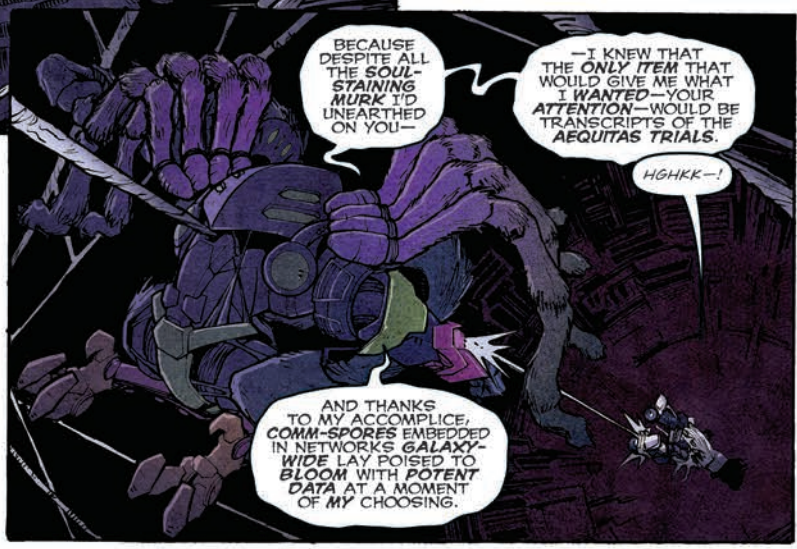


A TASK MADE SIMPLER BY EMPLOYING THE SKILLS OF AN INDIVIDUAL GIFTED AT EXHUMING COLD DATA TRAILS.

AFTER ALL, YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY MORALLY LAPSED CHARACTER TO WEAR THAT SIGIL.

THERE'S AN ENTIRE STRATA OF DISAFFECTED AUTOBOTS OUT THERE, WAITING TO HAVE THEIR HEADS TURNED...

MY PARTICULAR SAVANT KNEW EXACTLY WHICH KEYWORDS TO BE ALERT FOR, AND LOCATED THE DATASLUG ACCORDINGLY.



BECAUSE DESPITE ALL THE SOUL-STAINING MURK I'D UNEARTHED ON YOU—

—I KNEW THAT THE ONLY ITEM THAT WOULD GIVE ME WHAT I WANTED—YOUR ATTENTION—WOULD BE TRANSCRIPTS OF THE AEGUITAS TRIALS.

HGHKK—!

AND THANKS TO MY ACCOMPLICE, COMM-SPORES EMBEDDED IN NETWORKS GALAXY-WIDE LAY POISED TO BLOOM WITH POTENT DATA AT A MOMENT OF MY CHOOSING.



ONE TOUCH, AND IT'S ALL OUT THERE; THE WAR REIGNITES, THE AUTOBOTS ARE DISGRACED AND I'M A WALKING SYMBOL FOR WHERE IT ALL WENT WRONG.

SO, JUST SIMPLE, BOZING UNAMBITIOUS BLACKMAIL THEN?

THAT'S JUST THE BY-PRODUCT, THE AFTERBIRTH OF A POOR DECISION YOU'VE YET TO MAKE.



WHAT DO YOU WANT, TARANTULAS?

COME...

... I WANT TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING NAUGHTY...